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STATE FOR EUR/NCE A. JENSEN AND FOR NEA/ELA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EFIN](#) [EINV](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIA ON BOARD WITH LEBANON DEMARCHE; ON SYRIA  
IN PRINCIPLE

REF: A. STATE 11025

[1](#)B. STATE 10786

Classified By: Pol Counselor Ted Tanoue; Reasons 1.4(B) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) POLOFF delivered ref b demarche (and note verbale) on February 6 to MFA Director for Middle East and Africa Mihail Dobre. Dobre said Romania was "on board" with the U.S. points in support of Lebanon. He added that although it was too early to give a figure for Romania's financial support to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, Romania would make some type of pledge or donation. He reminded that Romania provided half-a-million Euros in 2007 (a late contribution within the framework of the Stockholm donors conference) in direct, bilateral assistance to Lebanon. He was confident that the GOR would do something similar.

[1](#)2. (C) POLOFF used the opportunity to inquire about planned visits by senior Romanian officials to Damascus, pointing out that it would be "extremely counterproductive" if Romania unintentionally provided SARG with a window of opportunity to argue that its international relations were "business as usual." Poloff pointed out the importance of the U.S. and EU member states together publicly addressing the provocative and destabilizing influence that Damascus (and Iran) have injected into the region. Dobre said the planned January 28 trip to Damascus by Minister of the Economy and Finance Varujan Vosganian had been postponed because of a recent tax dispute that required his full attention in Bucharest. Dobre said the visit was to be rescheduled following resolution of the tax issue, but he added that there were no plans for either the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister to go to Syria.

[1](#)3. (C) POLOFF stressed that the U.S. appeal was not/not limited to the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister, but any senior government officials, especially cabinet members. He stressed that Syria must pay a price for continuing to undermine the political and economic development and sovereignty of Lebanon. Dobre acknowledged that the discussion among EU members about how to deal with Syria and Lebanon had not produced a single strategy. He added that he had just finished consultations with France (Sarkozy visited Bucharest earlier this week), the EU Presidency (Slovenia, last week) and met with the Lebanese ambassador (on February 5) in order to provide Romania's inputs to the EU Presidency's mandate regarding a statement on Syria and Iran. He pointed out that Romania must choose between whether to disengage and try to isolate Syria, or to stay engaged and persuade Syria to improve its behavior and not provoke the

international community. POLOFF pointed out that a well-orchestrated U.S. and EU policy -- working together with other friendly countries -- to deny Syria's "business as usual" posturing is essential if there is to be any hope for strengthening democratic forces and holding accountable those who murder their political opponents. Dobre said he appreciated the U.S. position and would circulate the U.S. points (from refs a and b). He added, however, that perhaps the Embassy should speak directly to Minister Vosganian about his intended travel to the region.

¶4. (C) On another note, Dobre said Foreign Minister Cioroianu will be traveling to Tel Aviv and the territories in two weeks. The MFA originally had planned for Cioroianu to include a Beirut stop, but because of the suspension of agreement for (former Middle East Director) Daniel Tanase, the idea was dropped as long as Tanase remains only charge d'affaires. Dobre acknowledged that the Syrian influence in Lebanon was extremely negative and said "We must find a way to get Damascus to live up to its claims. We share the U.S. view about Syria's undesirable activities in Lebanon and against the reformers." He also reaffirmed that he would inform the U.S. Embassy once Romania's contribution to the Special Tribunal was decided.

¶5. (C) Comment: Once again we can see the MFA's weak influence on the other branches of the GOR. This meeting also underscores that Romania has "special interests" in maintaining an open door to Damascus, despite acknowledging the problems Syria creates in the region. It is only by a stroke of good fortune that Vosganian is not venturing to Damascus any time soon. Mission will continue to press our message up the GOR food chain. End comment.  
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